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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, S/CT, EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
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SUBJECT: POLICE RANK REFORM: MOI DECIDES TO MOVE AHEAD WITH
PHASE FOUR ASSIGNMENTS, UNAMA VETTING WILL FOLLOW

REF: KABUL 115

11. (SBU) Summary: The Ministry of Interior has decided to move forward immediately with assignments of police company grade officers (captains and lieutenants) to rank reform positions. At a January 30 meeting of the International Police Board Coordinating Action Group (IPCAG, a monthly meeting hosted by the German Police Program Office), German Ambassador for Police Affairs Helmut Frick reported that in a meeting earlier that day, attended by UNAMA and CSTC-A, the Minister of Interior decided to move forward immediately with Phase IV police rank reform assignments without waiting for international vetting to be completed. This position was supported by UNAMA's representative at the MOI meeting, Eckert Schiewek, who said that UNAMA vetting of the nearly 6,000 officers would take too long and significantly hold back the rank reform process. Schiewek, who also attended the IPCAG meeting, said that UNAMA recognizes to move forward quickly with rank reform because of the critical security situation throughout the country. UNAMA has therefore decided to that it will vet these junior officers but after they have been assigned to their new positions. It appears from the meeting report that the Ministry is ready, for now, to wait for vetting to be completed on Phase III candidates, as long as it is done expeditiously. End summary.

12. (SBU) Schiewek made the following points to explain UNAMA's decision:

1) UNAMA is already devoting significant resources to vetting and is unable to move any quicker than it is now. It estimates that it can vet approximately 20 candidates a day. At that rate it would take nearly a year - 285 working days - to complete

vetting the Phase IV candidates. (Note: 1,140 Captains, 1,710 First Lieutenants, and 2,836 Second Lieutenants. End note.)

2) The international community has received strong assurances from the Government of Afghanistan that if in subsequent vetting any candidate is found to be unsuitable, his employment will immediately be terminated. (Note: Evidence leading to UNAMA disqualification would include, in addition to human rights violations, any credible indication of corruption or other administrative malfeasance.)

3) UNAMA expects that it will uncover very few cases of disqualifying evidence for individuals at the rank of Captain or below. These individuals are mostly young and - given the tendency among Afghan senior officers not to delegate authority - have generally not been in positions that could lead to abuse of power.

4) The large majority of the officers in Phase IV reform will not be selected for new positions. Instead, the reform process will allow them to stay in their present jobs with a somewhat higher salary. (Note: Pre-reform salaries for these officers range from USD 66/mo to USD 78/mo; after reform they will receive between USD 180/mo and USD 250/mo. End note.) Allowing them to receive this higher salary, which they were promised would take effect several months ago, would significantly assist in ANP retention efforts.

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13. (SBU) Ambassador Frick, who has been a strong advocate of thorough police vetting, said that the MOI decision made sense and he supported it. The rank reform effort needs to move forward quickly, he said, and he found compelling the Minister's argument that international vetting has made it difficult to put the right people in key positions in a timely manner. Noting in particular that the very large number of individuals to be vetted, together with the small number of cases that would likely be uncovered through the vetting process, he agreed that the international community should be prepared to go back to the GOA and demand dismissal when required, rather than holding up the vast majority of individuals from receiving the higher level of pay to which they are entitled.

14. (SBU) Comment: The MOI meeting was called at the last minute, and the lack of invitation to the U.S. Embassy was certainly an unintended oversight. However CSTC-A Deputy Commanding General Young, who attended the meeting, was able to represent U.S. interests and has confirmed the contents of the discussion. The good news is that UNAMA, which recently said it would not vet Phase IV police candidates because it was unlikely to find many cases of abuse, has now said that it will do vetting, although at a pace that can be handled by its already overworked staff. Post has consistently advocated the need to place vetted, competent candidates in police leadership positions. The Minister of Interior is acting both on President Karzai's directive to move ahead quickly with police assignments (reftel) as well as his own cognizance of the security situation. His willingness thus far to wait until vetting is complete before placing candidates has been due to his desire to work cooperatively with the international community, rather than to any legal constraint, since the GOA has unilateral decision-making power over selections and assignments. He appears to still be willing to

do this for more senior officers, who are in positions of greater authority. However he has now considered the security imperative, including the need to pay a decent wage to officers who are risking their lives for their country, and has decided to move ahead with Phase IV postings.

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